AMENDED CLAIM SET:

1. (currently amended) A sample suction apparatus, comprising:

a first member, a second member, and a third member capable of linearly reciprocating along the same direction and spaced from each other, the second member being located between the first member and the third member; [[;]]

an elastically compressible spacer inserted between the second member and the third member;

a suction needle provided on the third member, the suction needle pointing to the first member; and

a single drive source provided on the third member, said single drive source adapted to perform ~~for performing~~: a first action of shifting the first member toward the second member such that the first member makes contact with a portion of a specimen vessel while maintaining a predetermined distance between the second member and the third member by elasticity of the spacer; a second action of shifting the second member together with the third member toward the first member until the second member makes contact with another portion of the specimen vessel such that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first and second members; and a third action of shifting the third member, against the elasticity of the spacer, toward the first member to bring the third member closer to the second member while maintaining the specimen

vessel sandwiched between the first member and the second member such that the suction needle is inserted in the specimen vessel.

2. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a rail,

wherein the first, second, and third members include three sliders slidably mounted on the rail.

3. (currently amended) A sample suction apparatus, comprising:

a first member, a second member, and a third member capable of linearly reciprocating along the same direction and spaced from each other, the second member being located between the first member and the third member;

a drive source provided on the third member to increase and reduce a distance between the first member and the third member;

an elastically compressible spacer inserted between the second member and the third member; and

a suction needle provided on the third member, the suction needle pointing to the first member,

wherein the drive source is adapted to reduce ~~reduces~~ the distance between the first member and the third member to perform: a first action of shifting the first member toward the third member to contact the first member

with a portion of a specimen vessel; a second action of shifting the second member together with the third member toward the first member to contact the second member with another portion of the specimen vessel so that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first and second members; and a third action of shifting the third member toward the first member to compress the spacer to bring the third member closer to the second member so that the suction needle is inserted in the specimen vessel, and

wherein the drive source includes an air cylinder having a piston rod, the air cylinder being provided on the third member and a distal end of the piston rod being connected with the first member.

4. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising:

a stopper for restricting movement of the first member toward the third member;

a substrate on which the rail and the stopper are provided; and

a biasing member for biasing the third member toward a direction opposite to the first member.

5. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising:

a stopper for restricting the movement of the first member toward the third member;

a substrate on which the rail and the stopper are provided; and

a biasing member for biasing the third member toward a direction opposite to the first member.

6. (original) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the spacer is a compressible spring.

7. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a sensor for detecting that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first member and the second member.

8. (currently amended) A sample suction apparatus, comprising:

a first member, a second member, and a third member capable of linearly reciprocating along the same direction and spaced from each other, the second member being located between the first member and the third member;

a drive source provided on the third member to enlarge and reduce a distance between the first member and the third member;

an elastically compressible spacer inserted between the second member and the third member;

a suction needle provided on the third member, the suction needle pointing to the first member; and

a washing bath provided in the second member for washing the suction needle,

wherein the drive source is adapted to reduce ~~reduces~~ the distance between the first member and the third member to perform: a first action of shifting the first member toward the third member to contact the first member with a portion of a specimen vessel; a second action of shifting the second member together with the third member toward the first member to contact the second member with another portion of the specimen vessel so that the specimen vessel is sandwiched between the first and second members; and a third action of shifting the third member toward the first member to compress the spacer to bring the third member closer to the second member so that the suction needle is inserted in the specimen vessel~~; and a washing bath provided in the second member for washing the suction needle~~.

9. (currently amended) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~the sample suction apparatus draws blood contained in~~ the specimen vessel contains blood as a specimen.

10. (previously presented) A hematology analyzer, comprising:

a sample suction apparatus according to claim 1; and

a conveyor for continuously transferring racks carrying a plurality of specimen vessels to the sample suction apparatus.

11. (previously presented) A hematology analyzer, comprising:

a first part for storing racks, each rack carrying a plurality of specimen vessels;

a second part for transferring the rack to a predetermined position;

a sample suction apparatus according to claim 1 for successively drawing specimen from each of the plurality of specimen vessels carried by the rack placed in the predetermined position; and

a third part for collecting the rack after specimen has been drawn from each of the plurality of specimen vessels carried by the rack.

12. (previously presented) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising:

a resilient member that urges the piston rod to extend in a direction the increases a distance between the first member and the third member, the resilient member having a spring coefficient smaller than a spring coefficient of the spacer.

13. (withdrawn) A sample suction apparatus for aspirating a specimen from a specimen vessel by using a suction needle, comprising:

a drive source;

a first movable member supporting a first end of the specimen vessel and adapted to be movable by the drive source;

a second movable member supporting a second end of the specimen vessel and adapted to be movable by the drive source; and

a third movable member holding the suction needle and adapted to be movable by the drive source,

wherein the second movable member is arranged between the first movable member and the third movable member.

14. (withdrawn) A sample suction apparatus according to claim 13, further comprising:

an elastic member arranged between the second movable member and the third movable member.